

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /069 W

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R 180810Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6292

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 9892

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CG

SUBJECT: MOBUTU'S ABSENCE FROM ZAIRE

1. DESPITE RECURRENT REPORTS OF HIS IMMINENT RETURN, AS OF THIS DATE MOBUTU AND HIS FAMILY REMAIN IN EUROPE. THE REASON GIVEN TO US PRIVATELY FOR HIS EXTENDED ABSENCE IS ILL HEALTH OF MRS. MOBUTU, WHO IS BEING TREATED IN A GENEVA HOSPITAL FOR SOME FORM OF HEART AILMENT. LATEST REPORT IS THAT THE PRESIDENT NOW PLANS TO RETURN TOWARD THE END OF THIS WEEK.

2. AS IS USUAL DURING MOBUTU'S PERIODIC STAYS IN SWITZERLAND, THE LOCAL PRESS IS MAKING A POINT OF PUBLICIZING HIS OFFICIAL MEETINGS WITH EUROPEAN STATESMEN AND GENERALLY KEEPING HIS NAME ON THE FRONT PAGES. UNLIKE PREVIOUS ABSENCES, HOWEVER, MOBUTU'S PRESENT STAY ABROAD HAS NOT ENGENDERED THE USUAL SPATE OF RUMORS TO THE EFFECT THAT HE IS IN POLITICAL TROUBLE OR IS PREPARING TO ABDICATE POWER. THIS MAY REFLECT MOBUTU'S STRENGTHENED POLITICAL POSITION IN RECENT MONTHS, OR THE CURRENT PREOCCUPATION WITH ELECTIONS, OR PERHAPS BOTH. CERTAINLY IT DOES NOT MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT ZAIRIANS HAVE ANY LESS REASON THAN BEFORE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS THEY MUST CONTINUE TO BEAR.

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3. AMONG OUR ZAIRIAN CONTACTS WE HAVE HEARD VERY LITTLE SURPRISE OR CRITICISM EXPRESSED RE MOBUTU'S FAILURE TO RETURN IN TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CURRENT ELECTIONS, EVEN THOUGH HE AND MRS. MOBUTU RECEIVED A GREAT DEAL OF MEDIA ATTENTION WHEN THEY WERE THE FIRST TO REGISTER TO VOTE SEVERAL WEEKS AGO. THE BEST EXPLANATION MAY LIE IN THE FACT THAT, CONTRARY TO OUR OWN WAYS, THE TRIBAL CHIEF'S SUBJECTS REALLY DO NOT EXPECT THEIR LEADER

TO PARTICIPATE DIRECTLY IN THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL
LIBERALIZATION HE HAS CREATED FOR THEM. OR, AS PUT MORE SIMPLY
BY ONE OF OUR ZAIRIAN FRIENDS, "MOBUTU DOES NOT HAVE TO VOTE".
CUTLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Oct-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Review Release Event: n/a
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SAS ID: 878703
Secure: OPEN
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Subject: MOBUTU\ S ABSENCE FROM ZAIRE
TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, CG, SZ, (MOBUTU SESE SEKO)
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